

110TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. R. 6613

To amend the Public Health Service Act to increase the number of dentists serving health professional shortage areas, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 24, 2008

Mr. CONYERS (for himself, Ms. KILPATRICK, Mr. RANGEL, Ms. LEE, Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, Mr. MEEKS of New York, Mr. COHEN, Ms. NORTON, Mr. GRIJALVA, and Mr. COURTNEY) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

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## A BILL

To amend the Public Health Service Act to increase the number of dentists serving health professional shortage areas, and for other purposes.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3       **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4       This Act may be cited as the “Improving Dental Ac-  
5       cess in Underserved Communities Act of 2008”.

6       **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7       Congress finds the following:

1           (1) Dental disease is a chronic problem among  
2           low-income and vulnerable populations. It is the  
3           most common, chronic childhood disease and is  
4           largely preventable.

5           (2) Access to oral health care services by under-  
6           served populations is affected by many factors in-  
7           cluding but not limited to income, public insurance  
8           coverage, geography, and transportation.

9           (3) Providing incentives for dentists to establish  
10          practices in underserved areas could help alleviate  
11          barriers to obtaining care.

12          (4) According to the American Dental Edu-  
13          cation Association (ADEA) dental school graduates'  
14          student loan debt now exceeds \$145,000.

15          (5) According to a 1998 American Dental Asso-  
16          ciation (ADA) member survey, the median cost of  
17          starting a dental practice was \$150,000 with an av-  
18          erage member reporting costs over \$174,000. Today  
19          that cost is estimated at close to \$250,000.

20          (6) Over 90 percent of practicing dentists are  
21          in the private sector. More needs to be done to make  
22          it financially attractive for those dentists to partici-  
23          pate in the Medicaid and SCHIP programs, which  
24          generally have low reimbursement service rates.

1           (7) The National Health Service Corps (NHSC)  
2       program has a proven record of supplying physicians  
3       and dentists to underserved areas, and has played  
4       an important role in expanding access for under-  
5       served populations in rural and inner city commu-  
6       nities.

7           (8) Continued expansion of the National Health  
8       Service Corps program is strongly recommended.

9           (9) The growing debt incurred by graduating  
10      dental students is likely to increase the interest and  
11      willingness of graduates of United States dental  
12      schools to apply for National Health Service Corps  
13      program funding and awards.

14 **SEC. 3. REAUTHORIZATION OF NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE**  
15 **CORPS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM AND LOAN**  
16 **REPAYMENT PROGRAM.**

17       (a) REAUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—Sec-  
18      tion 338H(a) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C.  
19      254q(a)) is amended by striking “\$146,250,000” and all  
20      that follows through the period and inserting  
21      “\$300,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2009 through  
22      2013.”.

23       (b) SCHOLARSHIPS FOR DENTAL STUDENTS.—Sec-  
24      tion 338H of such Act is further amended by adding at  
25      the end the following:

1       “(d) SCHOLARSHIPS FOR DENTAL STUDENTS.—Of  
 2 the amounts appropriated under subsection (a) for a fiscal  
 3 year, the Secretary shall obligate \$100,000,000 for con-  
 4 tracts for scholarships under this subpart to individuals  
 5 who are accepted for enrollment, or enrolled, in a course  
 6 of study or program described in section 338A(b)(1)(B)  
 7 that leads to a degree in dentistry.”.

8       **SEC. 4. REAUTHORIZATION OF CERTAIN PROGRAMS PRO-**  
 9                               **VIDING GRANTS FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONS**  
 10                              **TRAINING FOR DIVERSITY.**

11       (a) GRANTS FOR CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE.—Sec-  
 12 tion 736(h)(1) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C.  
 13 293(h)(1)) is amended by striking “\$26,000,000” and all  
 14 that follows through “2002” and inserting “\$33,610,000  
 15 for each of fiscal years 2009 through 2013”.

16       (b) EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR INDIVIDUALS  
 17 FROM DISADVANTAGED BACKGROUNDS.—Section 740(c)  
 18 of such Act (42 U.S.C. 293d(c)) is amended by striking  
 19 “\$29,400,000” and all that follows through the period and  
 20 inserting “\$35,650,000 for each of fiscal years 2009  
 21 through 2013.”.

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